



The Virginia Saltwater Review

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by

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OVERVIEW

Over the past two weeks, striped bass have begun to show up in the reports—anglers are finding them throughout the bay and at the local bridge tunnels. Tautogs have also made a showing at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel lately. Puppy drum (juvenile red drum) are still lurking around, and the speckled trout continue to bite. Offshore, amberjack and wahoos have been providing the best action.

This will be the final edition for the 2009 Virginia Saltwater Review, and we would like to thank all of our contributors for another successful season of working together, to provide anglers, near and far, a great overview of the true bounties of the Commonwealth of Virginia's marine fisheries. We will return with the 2010 Virginia Saltwater Review next spring for our 24th year! Please remember to be courteous and safe when traveling to and from your favorite fishing spot and responsible stewards of our natural resources. Enjoy the winter fishing season, and we will see you next year!

THE FISHING REPORT

Chincoteague

Donna, at Captain Bob's, reports that the very poor weather has left much of Chincoteague underwater over the past few weeks. Few anglers have been able to go out at all. Last week, when they were able to sneak out, several nice keeper-flounder were caught in the area.

Cape Charles

Staff at Chris' Bait and Tackle report little action over the past week. A few speckled trout were caught near Hungars Creek, and small schoolie striped bass were found under the lights at the Kiptopeke Pier. Tautogs were also landed near the high rise of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel.

Ernie, at Cherrystone Bait and Tackle, had very little to report except for a recent rise in striped bass catches.

Lower Bay/Bridge Tunnel

Small striped bass were reported from the Cobb's Marina area. Terrible weather could have contributed to slow fishing over the past weeks.

Staff at the Sunset Boating Center reported keeper striped bass from the Monitor Merrimac Bridge Tunnel. Last week, large flounder were hooked at the Hampton Bar, but there has been little flounder action in the past few days. Spot seem to have left the area as well.

Flounder and spot were reported from Salt Ponds Marina, along with small striped bass.

Ken Neill, of the Peninsula Anglers Club and IGFA representative, contributed the following:

The wind is finally giving us a little break this week, and everyone who can sneak out of work is getting out there. The bay water temperature has dropped, which has heated up the tautog bite at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel and over other structures in the bay. An already good speckled trout bite has gotten better. There are tremendous numbers of small speckled trout around, and plenty of larger trout are being found. They are being caught in the shallows almost everywhere. The Elizabeth River is particularly good right now. Large numbers of puppy drum are also being found in the shallows. The Elizabeth River and Lynnhaven Inlet are really good. The latest blow seems to be the end of the spot run. Striped bass, mostly small, are being caught at all of the area crossings. Fish will become more numerous and of larger sizes as the season progresses. Large flounder should be available around some of the ocean wrecks like those at the Triangle Reef, the Tower Reef, and at the Brass Spike. Triggerfish will still be active on the coastal wrecks, but any black sea bass you catch in federal waters must be released. When anglers have been able to get offshore, tuna catches have been fantastic in the area of the Point. There will be plenty of boats out after them this week.

Dr. Julie Ball, IGFA International Representative for Virginia Beach, contributed the following:

Although windy weather is not allowing much opportunity for fishing on the open water, few anglers are complaining since sheltered waters are providing remarkable speckled trout action. Plenty of fish averaging around three pounds are keeping casters content, while the numbers of citation fish are also on the rise. The most consistent speck action is happening in Rudee Inlet, Little Creek, Lynnhaven River, Back River, the Eastern Shore shallows, the Poquoson flats, and the Elizabeth River. The best lures are chartreuse or red and white Mirrolures, with smoke-colored grubs and Gulp grubs also producing. Trolling with lures and grubs in the Elizabeth River is also effective lately.

Puppy drum (juvenile red drum) are still generating a lot of interest within backwater areas, where anglers are scoring with nice pups up to 30 inches long in both Lynnhaven and Rudee inlets. Surf anglers are also experiencing good puppy drum encounters on cut bait from Fort Story to Sandbridge.

The inshore and bay tautog bite is generating a stir, with limits of keeper fish ranging from 5 to 7 pounds becoming the norm. Several nice keepers were boated from around the artificial islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel this week on fiddlers and blue crab. Wreck action is also taking off nicely with ample numbers of respectable triggerfish still available in the same areas.

As water temperatures begin to cool, striped bass are becoming more active. Casters are scoring with schoolie-sized rockfish between 18 and 22 inches along the Monitor Merrimack, the James River Bridge, the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel, and the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. The bite is especially good during the nighttime hours along the light lines. Wire liners are also boating fish ranging from 22 to 24 inches from the tubes of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel this week. Lots of bluefish around 5 pounds are rounding out most catches.

Spot reports are now scarce within the lower bay, but surf and pier anglers are still catching good numbers of nice-sized spot off of Sandbridge as the fish make their way south. Scattered pompano and speckled trout are also showing in the Sandbridge surf.

Although the bull red action off Sandbridge slowed up this week, red drum are still a possibility along the ocean front, along the Eastern Shore shoals, and near the 3rd island of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel.

Even though anglers are finding a few cooperative fish, the flounder bite is sluggish due to the muddy water right now. Drifting strip baits along the Baltimore Channel, near Buoy 36A, and along the small boat channel are good places to try when the wind breaks. Working bait and jigs around the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel structure can also prove effective for big flatties. These fish are plump right now as they fatten up in preparation for their migration offshore. Some of the deeper water wrecks are also giving up a few decent flatfish mixed in with many shorts.

Offshore, it has been difficult to get out due to the weather. When boats could make it to the deep this week, the action was slow. Wahoos provided a little action, along with a few yellowfin tuna and scattered bailer dolphins. Once overnight trips resume with more regularity, swordfish are a possibility.

Virginia Middle Bay

The only fish anglers seem to be going for in this area of the bay are striped bass. Roger, with Jett's Hardware, has seen a lot of action around Little River Jetty and the Northern Neck Reef. Small bluefish are around the reef and jetties as well, and spot have pretty much moved out.

Butch, at Garrett's Marina, reports striped bass weighing up to 8 pounds are working their way along the Rappahannock River. Some spot may still be holding in the creeks.

Jerry Thrash, of Queen's Creek Outfitters, reported the following:

Spot and croakers were still available in the Rappahannock last week and may last through this weekend. Puppy drum were available in the New Point area before the weekend blow. Striped bass fishermen have done best if they chummed the waters near structures where schoolie stripers were

available on eels, small spot, and cut menhaden. Schoolie bluefish are mixed in the chum line as well. Stripers are also being caught by light tackle fishermen along shore structure in creeks and along river banks. With water temperatures in the low 60s, it will have to cool quite a bit before schooling starts in earnest. The fall speckled trout run materialized in the Piankatank in the past 10 days with great fishing over grass beds. Mirrolures and DOA shrimp have been the most effective lures. The warm weather this week promises more good action.

Virginia Beach

According to staff at the Virginia Beach Fishing Center, speckled trout and puppy drum are available in the inlet, along with a few spot. Taylor bluefish, croakers, and a few flounder were also reported. Inshore trips have been rewarded with Spanish mackerel, bluefish, cobias, flounder, and striped bass in the bay, with king mackerel being caught a little further out. Offshore, anglers found mostly amberjack and wahoos, with some dolphins, a couple of yellowfin tuna, and a few white marlins mixed in.

Virginia Piers

At the Ocean View Pier, spot and croaker fishing has been slow, but nice catches of speckled trout and puppy drum were reported.

Staff at the Virginia Beach Pier reported decent spot catches along with croaker, puppy drum, and small bluefish. Please note that the Virginia Beach Pier will close for the season this Sunday, October 25th.

The Buckroe Pier could not be reached this week due to problems with the phone system.

Outer Banks, NC

Offshore fishing out of Oregon Inlet was poor with strong winds and large waves being the fishermen's bane for the last week. For those who could stomach the rough water, blackfin tuna made the strongest showing. Other species that were caught in lower numbers included yellowfin tuna, wahoos, dolphins, and amberjack with a few billfish. Striped bass were available approximately 16 miles offshore. The offshore artificial reefs were holding tautogs, triggerfish, sheepshead, black drum, and blueline tilefish. When the wind let up enough for surf fishing, the red drum bite proved to be very good. Flounder, speckled trout, Spanish mackerel, bluefish, spot, and croakers were also biting in the surf. Inshore fishing has had a good run of red drum in Oregon Inlet. Speckled trout are holding around the bridges.

South of Oregon Inlet, the fishing has been great with puppy drum (juvenile red drum) action at the Point. Speckled trout have been caught around the Frisco Pier. Spot, sea mullet, and bluefish have been caught around the south beach area.

Offshore fishing out of Hatteras Inlet saw improvement in the weather late in the week, and the fishing followed suit with yellowfin tuna and king mackerel as the headliners. Wahoos, blackfin tuna, and dolphins were biting in lower numbers as well. Nearshore fishing has seen good numbers of bluefish, and those plying the inside waters of the sounds have been rewarded with red drum, flounder, and speckled trout.

If you have additional information or would like further details contact Joe Grist at (757) 247-2237.

Please credit the Virginia Marine Resources Commission's THE SALTWATER REVIEW as the source of the fishing information.











ATTENTION VIRGINIA SALTWATER ANGLERS!!!

THE VIRGINIA MARINE RESOURCES COMMISSION

***WANTS YOUR FISH....
TO MEASURE AND AGE.***

*You catch it, you fillet it,
but instead of throwing the remains in the trash,
please donate them to science.*

The Marine Sportfish Collection Project will focus on species of fish that are difficult to collect through the agency's normal sampling program. Anglers are asked to donate their filleted carcasses (head and tail intact) of legal and fresh-caught:

COBIA	SHEEPSHEAD	RED DRUM	BLACK DRUM	TAUTOG
				
KING MACKEREL	SPANISH MACKEREL	TILEFISH (BLUELINE OR GOLDEN)	WRECKFISH, SNOWY GROUPE, WARSAW GROUPE	BLUEFISH (GREATER THAN 16 POUNDS OR 36 INCHES)
				

In return for participating in the project, the agency will provide a ONE FREE PROJECT TEE SHIRT or HAT, FOR EACH PARTICIPANT, PER MONTH of the DONATION.

Please visit these bait and tackle merchants to participate:

Chris' Bait and Tackle (Capeville)
Long Bay Pointe Marina (Virginia Beach)
Wallace's Bait and Tackle (Hampton)
Buckroe Fishing Pier (Hampton)
Virginia Beach Fishing Center (Virginia Beach)



ATTENTION VIRGINIA SALTWATER ANGLERS!!!

Get Hooked!

Report at www.vasaltwaterjournal.com

The Virginia Marine Resources Commission wants to know about the saltwater fish you caught and if you threw it back or took it home for dinner. How big was it? What species was it? Where did you catch it? This self-reported catch-and-release information will be posted on-line, giving the recreational angler a broader picture of what everyone else is catching -- and where.



The Fisherman's Journal is a tool intended to benefit the individual angler, the fishing community, and fishery managers. It allows individual anglers to keep an easy-to-retrieve record of their successful fishing experiences. It allows the fishing community to share and learn about other anglers' experiences. Finally, it benefits fishery managers by allowing them to assess fish populations by analyzing data provided by you, the recreational fisherman.

You will be able to report catch-and-release ranges, in addition to individual fish kept or released.

On those days that you catch-and-release 50 bluefish, you can just report the number caught and a range of lengths. Reporting individual measurements on more highly prized species -- such as Red Drum, Striped Bass and Flounder -- provides a greater benefit for everyone.

Anglers also may report their fishing trip information, including general location, time of day, weather and water conditions and type of gear and bait used. This information could be extremely valuable to other anglers to give them an idea of what is caught, where it is caught, and what bait is working on what species.

This self-reporting program will help anglers to become more successful and will provide fishery managers with important anecdotal information on recreational catches. The voluntary on-line reporting system is called the "Saltwater Fisherman's Journal," and is found at www.vasaltwaterjournal.com.

A screenshot of the Virginia Marine Resources Commission's "Recreational Fishing Online Reporting" page. The page has a blue header with the text "Virginia Marine Resources Commission Recreational Fishing Online Reporting" and the Virginia Marine Resources Commission seal. Below the header is a section titled "Recreational Saltwater Fishing" with a "Welcome Jgrist," message. There are two main content areas. The left area features the "Virginia Recreational Assessment Program" logo and a box with the date "June 16, 2008" and statistics: "Members: 1,457", "Trips: 295", and "Catches: 3,941". The right area contains two sections: "Red Drum Reports are Needed!" with a paragraph about collecting length data for red drum, and "New 2008 Tautog Regs" with a table of regulations.

New 2008 Tautog Regs	
Closed Season	May 1 through June 24
Minimum Size Limit	14 inches
Possession Limit	4 per person

Introducing the Virginia Fishing Line Recycling Program!

- Please help keep our waterways cleaner and safer for:
 - fish
 - birds
 - marine mammals
 - boaters and swimmers
- Deposit used or tangled monofilament fishing line into specially marked containers!



VMRC-Managed Locations!*

Locations!*

Ocean View Fishing Pier, Norfolk
Long Bay Pointe Marina, Virginia Beach
Buckroe Fishing Pier, Hampton
Chris' Bait and Tackle, Cape Charles
Capt. Bob's Marina, Chincoteague
Wallace's Bait and Tackle, Hampton
Don's Bait and Tackle, Wachapreague



***DGIF manages other locations throughout Virginia**

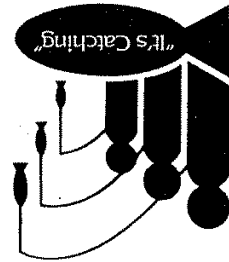
The Virginia Fishing Line Recycling Program is run jointly by the Virginia Marine Resources Commission and the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries with support from the Boat US Foundation.

If you have any questions about the program, or suggestions for new container locations, please contact Alicia Nelson at (757) 247-2244 or email alicia.nelson@mrc.virginia.gov.



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Practice

CAREFUL CATCH

REDUCE STRESS FACTORS THAT KILL FISH

Exhaustion * Loss of Slime * Wounds * Time out of Water